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UOG UNVEILS JOINT VENTURE

The UAE Offsets Group, UOG, yesterday announced the creation of a pre-offset joint venture inspection services company. The company, Solex Robotics Services, LLC, is a 51:49 joint venture between Al Mansoori Specialised Engineering and Solex Environmental Services of Houston, Texas. The company will have an initial capital of \$ 2.0 million and will start operating in Abu Dhabi within four to six months.

Solex Environmental Services is working in co-ordination with the General Electric Company, GEC, of the United States, which is competing for the engine contract on the F 16 Fighting Falcon aircraft. The UAE Air Force has shown interest in buying the F16s.

The venture will provide inspection services for bulk liquid storage tanks holding refined petroleum and chemical products. The Abu Dhabi-based venture will combine Al Mansoori's expertise in oil field services with the state-of-the-art robotics system called 'Maverick', developed by Solex in conjunction with the United States' Department of Energy. Maverick, an advanced technology, remotely-operated robot, collects corrosion data from the interior walls and bottom of tanks with a refined product while they remain in service.

Addressing a press conference at the Abu Dhabi Inter-Continental Hotel, Nabil al Alawi, Managing Director of Al Mansoori, said the venture holds strong promise of benefiting the national economy. "Our company's mission is to provide the highest quality services in a safe manner and the use of robotics to replace labour in the maintenance of petroleum and chemical tanks offers tremendous advantages. For example, personnel required for a typical inspection will be reduced from 40 to three.

As a result, operators will realise significant savings compared to current manual inspections." Al Mansoori Services has been a leading oil field supplies and services company in the UAE since 1977. The company offers a wide range of services including wireline and completion, pipe inspection, mud engineering, production testing, oilfield supply and rental services and representation of international companies. The Gulf Technical and Training Centre, wholly-owned by Al Mansoori, is a premier oilfield training facility in the UAE.

Don Hartsel of Solex said the UAE will be the first country in the world to use Maverick and he added that the inspection market in the Gulf is estimated at around \$ 171.0 million a year and is expected to grow further. "This holds a lot of promise for Solex Robotics Services, LLC," he stated. (The Emirates News)

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ADNOC PLANS TO EXPAND DOWNSTREAM INDUSTRIES

The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, ADNOC, plans to expand its downstream industries in refining, gas and petrochemicals in a big way, the just-concluded Fifth Middle East Petroleum and Gas Conference, MPGC, was told by company officials in an hour-long presentation. Major projects are in hand to meet and fuel the growth of the domestic demand, make optimum use of the emirate's hydrocarbon resources, diversify its industrial base and enhance its status as a preferred supplier in the export market.

Local demand is led by the call for more gas for power generation, water desalination, gas-based industries and for injection into wells to maintain reservoir pressure and produce condensate and liquid natural gas, LNG. Phase I of the Onshore Gas Development Project, OGD, consisting of two trains to process associated and non-associated gas from Thamama B and C reservoirs and one train of 625.0 million cubic feet, mcf, per day from Thamama F reservoir was recently commissioned.

The project, the conference was told, has increased total gas processing capacity to 1,865.0 mcf per day, while injection capability has been upped by 830.0 mcf. As a result, condensate recovery has gone up from 15,000.0 to 130,000.0 barrels per day and provided an additional 4,500.0 tonnes per day of LNG. Condensate is currently exported through expanded facilities at Ruwais while work is in progress on the expansion and upgrading of the refinery under a master plan, EUM.

With the commissioning of OGD Phase I, attention has now shifted to Phase II, which will provide an additional 50,000.0 bpd of condensate as well as 1,000 mcfpd of sales gas. The project is at the final stage and is expected to be completed by the year 2000. As part of Phase II, the Asab Gas Development Project, due for completion in 1999, nearly 825.0 mcfpd of associated gas will be produced as well as 100,000 bpd of condensate. While the latter will be processed at Ruwais, the gas will be re-injected into the Asab field.

A project is also underway to process and utilise over 500.0 mcfpd of offshore gas from the Abu Bakhoosh Khuff and Umm Shaif Khuff region. The raw gas from the offshore fields will be processed onshore at Taweelah while the Front End Engineering Design, FEED, phase of the project will commence shortly with commissioning due in the year 2000. The purpose of Ruwais's own expansion and upgrading plan, besides enlarging its condensates processing facility (to 280,000.0 bpd) is to double its crude oil processing capacity.

The officials told the conference that onshore gas production in the emirate is expected to increase over 3.0 million cubic feet per day, cfpd, by the end of this century. Condensates production is expected to double. In the EUM's first phase, two condensate processing trains of 140,000.0 bpd will be brought on stream six months apart during 1999, followed by facilities to produce unleaded gasoline and a gas-oil hydro-treater to reduce sulphur content. (The Khaleej Times)

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IDEX BUSINESS VILLAGE WILL BOOST UAE ECONOMY

The International Business Village at the International Defence Exhibition, IDEX '97, will give visitors and businessmen an insight into the opportunities available in the UAE, Brigadier Staff Sultan O.B. Al Suwaidi, Chairman, The Military Committee for International Defence Exhibitions and Conferences,

CODEX, said yesterday.

"The Business Village is an outcome of our endeavours aimed at coming up with new ideas and concepts to promote the UAE, especially its economy which has made a lot of headway in recent years," he told a press conference held at the IDEX Business Village. Brigadier Suwaidi said the Village is the brainchild of Lt. General Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chief of Staff of the UAE Armed Forces and patron of the UAE Offset Group, UOG, and enjoys the full support of the Government.

IDEX '97 will be held from Sunday to Thursday, March 16 to 20 and will draw around 750 exhibitors and 50,000 visitors from around the world. "The decision to set up the Business Village at IDEX '97 was taken after detailed discussions and consultations with the UOG and the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, ADCCI," Brigadier Al Suwaidi said.

He said the Village provides an ideal opportunity to both UAE and international businessmen to establish contacts with prospective partners and to look into ways of enhancing the productivity of their businesses. "In introducing the International Business Village we simply answered the request of our local business and financial community. We look forward to seeing a large number of UAE businessmen and entrepreneurs, especially the young and aspiring ones, at the Village."

Economists, contacted by Emirates News for a comment on the Village and what it could achieve for the UAE, said that the Village does make a lot of sense when one takes a look at the commercial activity and the plans to develop the private sector of the UAE to diversify the economy. They said a look at the programme of the seminar series which will take place at the Village gives a fairly good idea of what the future holds for the UAE.

The four seminars - on 'Offsets', 'Energy and Infrastructure Investment Opportunities in the UAE', 'Doing Business in the UAE' and 'Financial Markets' - will feature panelists from organisations like the UOG, ADNOC, Citibank, Merrill Lynch, the local investment firm 10N and the law firm Afridi & Angell. The economists said that with the planned Sadiyat Free Zone, the industrial port at Taweela, as well as an official stock market in the UAE, one can say that things are moving in the right direction for the UAE economy.

With the planned defence expenditure on top of these factors of around Dh 3.06 billion over the next five years, they added, the presence of the UOG at the seminars is an indicator that the Group, in the near future, will be fairly busy in putting together offset and pre-offset joint ventures between local business and international defence suppliers.

In terms of facilities, the 1,300.0 square metres Village has a balcony overlooking the exhibition and demonstration grounds, windows and balconies overlooking the nautical demonstrations, a silver zone, a gold zone, a platinum zone, exhibition space, a VIP lounge, offices for private members and sponsors, a communication centre, a bar, a lounge area and a seminar room.

For defence companies, the Village could be a way of meeting companies they need for offset and companies with knowledge of the UAE market, while for non-defence companies it could lead to partnerships that broaden into more than just offset related work.

"The Village is a comfortable, functional, sophisticated and exclusive space for investors, industrialists, entrepreneurs, financiers, traders and others to meet and interact," Brigadier Suwaidi said. At the Village will also be announced the creation of the Gulf Investment Club which is aimed at identifying new

investment opportunities in the region by providing its members a forum to exchange ideas and to make contacts with prospective future partners. (The Emirates News)

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SHARJAH CHILD FESTIVAL TAKES OFF

Hundreds of children from more than 20 Arab countries walked along the Sharjah Buhaira Corniche yesterday evening on the first day of the 13th Child Festival organised by the Higher Council of Childhood, HCC, and the Department of Culture and Information, DCI, in Sharjah. The festival will last for 10 days, until Friday, March 21, 1997.

Clad in beautifully-coloured clothes, boys and girls walked from the Popular Coffee Shop on the Buhaira Corniche to Al Majez Park. In this multi-national carnival, the majority of the children were dressed in their national dress depicting their culture and national identity. They marched in small groups representing their countries, institutions, schools and various organisations and associations, while hundreds of people on both sides of the road at the Corniche keenly watched the jubilant youngsters and cheered them by clapping.

Credit goes to the organisers for arranging such a disciplined event. It was a show of strength, integrity, respect, brotherhood and discipline among the children, regardless of any boundaries. Throughout the way, children waved to the crowd on the road and the rostrum and also raised slogans showing unity among themselves. Some of the youngsters were in scouts' and guides' uniforms while TV cameras on the road and from helicopters were flying around the children's caravan.

"These helicopters are looking like butterflies hovering over the blossoming flowers, the children," commented one woman, busy clicking away with her camera. Another salient feature of the carnival was the floats, in different shapes and forms and decorated by different departments in Sharjah, including the Sharjah Educational Zone, the Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services, the Water and Electricity Department, the Health Department and the HCC.

As the children reached the rostrum where Majid Abdullah bu Shalibi, HCC Secretary General, and other guests were seated, colourful balloons were set free. A series of activities focusing on the Arab child will continue throughout the Festival. (The Gulf Today)

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